

# News

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## **WASHINGTON-BALTIMORE RETAIL FOOD, ENERGY, AND SHELTER PRICE INDEXES: FEBRUARY 2003**

Food at home, energy, and shelter prices were all higher in February in the Washington-Baltimore Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area (CMSA), as measured by the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U), the United States Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. Sheila Watkins, the Bureau's regional commissioner, noted that this was the first time since June 2001 that prices for these categories increased at the same time.

Food at home prices increased 0.7 percent in February, following a 1.0 percent decline in January. The recent increase was largely due to higher prices for uncooked ground beef, uncooked beef roasts, and eggs, among others. Partially offsetting the overall rise in food at home prices were lower prices for a number of items, including citrus fruits, tomatoes, and other fresh vegetables. Over the year, food at home prices increased 1.0 percent.

The Washington-Baltimore area food at home index was 110.4 on the December 1997=100 base, which means that grocery shoppers in the Washington-Baltimore area would have had to spend \$11.04 last month for a market basket of food items that cost \$10.00 in December 1997.

Energy prices increased 5.3 percent in February, due in large part to higher gasoline prices. Following a 3.2 percent increase in January, gasoline prices jumped 8.8 percent in February. Due to advances in 7 of the last 12 months, gasoline prices were 44.8 percent higher than a year ago—the largest 12-month increase since March 2000. Higher prices for natural gas and fuel oil also contributed to the increase in the energy index. Natural gas prices were up 3.9 percent since January and were 17.5 percent higher than year-ago levels—the largest 12-month increase in nearly two years. Electricity prices were unchanged over the month but were 1.2 percent lower than last year. The overall energy index was up 23.1 percent over the year—the largest 12-month increase in nearly three years.

The Washington-Baltimore energy index stood at 117.1 on the November 1996 base, which means that energy users in the Washington-Baltimore area would have spent \$11.71 last month for a group of energy items that cost \$10.00 in November 1996.

The shelter index, which includes rent of primary residence, owners' equivalent rent of primary residence, lodging away from home, and tenants' and household insurance, rose for the fifth consecutive month, up 0.5 percent since January. Owners' equivalent rent of primary residence and rent of primary residence both increased 0.2 percent in February and had over-the-year increases of 4.6 percent and 5.3 percent, respectively. The overall shelter index rose 3.5 percent over the last 12 months.

Local area indexes are by-products of the national CPI program. Because each local index is a small subset of the national index, it has a smaller sample size and is therefore subject to substantially more sampling and other measurement error than the national index. As a result, area indexes show greater volatility than the national index, although their long-term trends are quite similar. Short-term changes in local indexes may reflect strictly seasonal influences.

Table 1. Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U): Indexes and percent changes for selected periods, Washington-Baltimore, DC-MD-VA-WV (December 1997=100 unless otherwise noted)

Expenditure category	Indexes			Percent change from-		
	Dec. 2002	Jan. 2003	Feb. 2003	Feb. 2002	Dec. 2002	Jan. 2003
All items (1).....	-	114.6	-	-	-	-
Food and beverages (1).....	-	112.9	-	-	-	-
Food (1).....	-	112.9	-	-	-	-
Food at home .....	110.7	109.6	110.4	1.0	-0.3	0.7
Food away from home (2).....	-	115.0	-	-	-	-
Alcoholic beverages (2).....	-	111.5	-	-	-	-
Housing (1).....	-	119.2	-	-	-	-
Shelter .....	123.0	123.1	123.7	3.5	.6	.5
Rent of primary residence (1) (3).....	127.7	128.3	128.6	5.3	.7	.2
Owners' equivalent rent of primary residence (3).....	122.1	122.0	122.3	4.6	.2	.2
Fuels and utilities .....	-	106.5	-	-	-	-
Fuels .....	103.5	104.2	105.7	5.1	2.1	1.4
Gas (piped) and electricity (3).....	101.8	101.7	102.7	3.0	.9	1.0
Electricity (3).....	98.5	98.2	98.2	-1.2	-.3	.0
Utility natural gas service (3).....	113.0	114.0	118.4	17.5	4.8	3.9
Household furnishings and operations .....	-	108.6	-	-	-	-
Apparel (1).....	-	91.1	-	-	-	-
Transportation (1).....	-	107.4	-	-	-	-
Private transportation .....	-	106.9	-	-	-	-
Motor fuel .....	120.7	124.7	135.7	44.5	12.4	8.8
Gasoline (all types) .....	120.8	124.7	135.7	44.8	12.3	8.8
Gasoline, unleaded regular (4).....	121.0	124.8	136.5	47.2	12.8	9.4
Gasoline, unleaded midgrade (4).....	120.5	124.2	134.8	42.9	11.9	8.5
Gasoline, unleaded premium (4).....	120.6	124.7	134.2	41.1	11.3	7.6
Medical care (1).....	-	116.6	-	-	-	-
Recreation .....	-	108.7	-	-	-	-
Education and communication .....	-	113.2	-	-	-	-
Other goods and services (1).....	-	135.0	-	-	-	-
Commodity and service group						
Commodities .....	-	106.9	-	-	-	-
Commodities less food and beverages .....	-	103.5	-	-	-	-
Nondurables less food and beverages .....	-	110.5	-	-	-	-
Durables .....	-	94.8	-	-	-	-
Services .....	-	119.5	-	-	-	-
Special aggregate indexes						
All items less medical care (1).....	-	114.4	-	-	-	-
All items less shelter .....	-	110.3	-	-	-	-
Commodities less food .....	-	103.9	-	-	-	-
Nondurables .....	-	111.3	-	-	-	-
Nondurables less food .....	-	110.6	-	-	-	-
Services less rent of shelter .....	-	115.7	-	-	-	-
Services less medical care services .....	-	119.9	-	-	-	-
Energy (1).....	109.0	111.2	117.1	23.1	7.4	5.3
All items less energy .....	-	114.3	-	-	-	-
All items less food and energy (1).....	-	115.3	-	-	-	-

1 For Washington-Baltimore, index is on a November 1996=100 base.

2 For Washington-Baltimore, index is on a November 1997=100 base.

3 This index series was calculated using a Laspeyres estimator. All other item stratum index series converted to a geometric means estimator in January, 1999.

4 Special index based on a substantially smaller sample.

- Data not available.

NOTE: Index applies to a month as a whole, not to any specific date.

Table 2. Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W): Indexes and percent changes for selected periods, Washington-Baltimore, DC-MD-VA-WV (December 1997=100 unless otherwise noted)

Expenditure category	Indexes			Percent change from-		
	Dec. 2002	Jan. 2003	Feb. 2003	Feb. 2002	Dec. 2002	Jan. 2003
All items (1).....	-	114.1	-	-	-	-
Food and beverages (1).....	-	112.4	-	-	-	-
Food (1).....	-	112.4	-	-	-	-
Food at home .....	110.5	109.5	111.0	1.7	0.5	1.4
Food away from home (2).....	-	115.0	-	-	-	-
Alcoholic beverages (2).....	-	111.1	-	-	-	-
Housing (1).....	-	119.2	-	-	-	-
Shelter .....	123.3	123.5	123.9	3.9	.5	.3
Rent of primary residence (1) (3).....	127.5	128.1	128.4	5.2	.7	.2
Owners' equivalent rent of primary residence (3).....	121.7	121.6	121.9	4.5	.2	.2
Fuels and utilities .....	-	105.0	-	-	-	-
Fuels .....	102.6	102.8	103.7	3.2	1.1	.9
Gas (piped) and electricity (3).....	101.5	101.3	102.0	2.2	.5	.7
Electricity (3).....	98.5	98.1	98.2	-1.1	-.3	.1
Utility natural gas service (3).....	115.5	116.0	119.9	17.0	3.8	3.4
Household furnishings and operations .....	-	106.3	-	-	-	-
Apparel (1).....	-	91.5	-	-	-	-
Transportation (1).....	-	106.8	-	-	-	-
Private transportation .....	-	106.6	-	-	-	-
Motor fuel .....	120.7	124.8	135.7	44.5	12.4	8.7
Gasoline (all types) .....	120.7	124.8	135.7	44.8	12.4	8.7
Gasoline, unleaded regular (4).....	120.9	125.0	136.7	47.5	13.1	9.4
Gasoline, unleaded midgrade (4).....	120.5	124.3	134.8	42.9	11.9	8.4
Gasoline, unleaded premium (4).....	120.5	124.6	134.0	40.8	11.2	7.5
Medical care (1).....	-	115.6	-	-	-	-
Recreation .....	-	107.0	-	-	-	-
Education and communication .....	-	110.8	-	-	-	-
Other goods and services (1).....	-	145.8	-	-	-	-
Commodity and service group						
Commodities .....	-	107.9	-	-	-	-
Commodities less food and beverages .....	-	105.5	-	-	-	-
Nondurables less food and beverages .....	-	115.2	-	-	-	-
Durables .....	-	95.1	-	-	-	-
Services .....	-	119.3	-	-	-	-
Special aggregate indexes						
All items less medical care (1).....	-	114.0	-	-	-	-
All items less shelter .....	-	110.1	-	-	-	-
Commodities less food .....	-	105.8	-	-	-	-
Nondurables .....	-	113.2	-	-	-	-
Nondurables less food .....	-	114.8	-	-	-	-
Services less rent of shelter .....	-	114.6	-	-	-	-
Services less medical care services .....	-	119.6	-	-	-	-
Energy (1).....	108.8	110.8	116.6	23.0	7.2	5.2
All items less energy .....	-	113.9	-	-	-	-
All items less food and energy (1).....	-	114.9	-	-	-	-

1 For Washington-Baltimore, index is on a November 1996=100 base.

2 For Washington-Baltimore, index is on a November 1997=100 base.

3 This index series was calculated using a Laspeyres estimator. All other item stratum index series converted to a geometric means estimator in January, 1999.

4 Special index based on a substantially smaller sample.

- Data not available.

NOTE: Index applies to a month as a whole, not to any specific date.